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ABSTRACT

Before they attempt to organize their classrooms to meet varying student needs, secondary teachers should establish a comprehensive framework for their instructional program, based on a diagnostic plan and on an instructional plan. Many different organizational strategies have been found successful by secondary teachers, both for teaching reading and for teaching in content areas. In one strategy, students select the manner in which they would like to work on their assignments: in a teacher-directed group, in a small group, or individually. Another management strategy involves a rotating schedule of activities, including lectures, direct instruction, work in interest centers, free reading, work in groups, and evaluation activities. Various types of contracting systems are also effective with secondary students. Finally, secondary teachers can adopt highly individualized approaches. One complex model of an individualized system, the IGE (Individually Guided Education) model, has proved successful in middle schools and is currently being tested at the secondary level. In this program, the teacher provides activities to meet the individual needs of students, each of whom has a personal set of objectives based on pretests and posttests. (GW)

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DOGS - Designs for Organizing "Gobs" of Students

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DOGS - Designs for Organizing "Gobs" of Students

One of the most difficult tasks for the secondary teacher - reading and content area alike - is the organization and management of the classroom to meet varying student needs more effectively. The secondary level teacher generally faces more problems in management than the elementary teacher - larger numbers of students, shorter class periods, more outside pressures for particular curricula, and wider variations in student abilities and skill levels. Although one could counter that the elementary teacher in the self-contained classroom must organize and manage all subject areas, one must acknowledge that the typical secondary teacher receives much less training in management techniques than the average elementary teacher does. Thus the topic "organization and management" justly demands attention at the secondary level. The purpose of this paper is to present organizational strategies that have been "used and proved" in actual classroom settings.

For the middle school, junior high, or secondary teacher who is searching for ideas for better structuring his or her classroom, what are some suggested procedures? First the secondary teacher needs to establish a comprehensive organizational framework for the entire instructional program. The initial consideration for such a framework should be a diagnostic plan. Data from standardized tests should be supplemented by informal techniques or cloze procedures and by attitudinal instruments. The second consideration should be an instructional plan such as the constellation unit plan proposed by Burmeister (1974)

which allows for whole class, small group, and personalized activities from units built around themes, games, or skills.

Within this comprehensive organizational framework, the teacher can then approach the challenge of attending to the needs of individual students of varying skills and abilities. The teacher devises ways to "bypass" reading difficulties and allow for varying reading levels among students with the focus being on exposure to selected concepts through a variety of media and methods. Also the teacher develops techniques to teach those specific reading skills significant to a certain content area. Herber (1970), however, cautions the content area teacher to postpone his concern about specific skills until he has mastered the concept of "levels of comprehension" (literal, interpretive, and applied) and has successfully used the concept in his classroom.

After the secondary teacher has determined the overall plan, he can then too consider more detailed components of that comprehensive system. The following organizational strategies were all formulated or adapted by classroom teachers or former classroom teachers.

Herber (1970) calls attention to the fact that individualization of instruction is accomplished by how material (whether single or multiple sources) is used, and does not rest within the material itself. The first teacher-developed strategy (Baldwin) involves the use of a single text with supplementary newspapers and magazines. Each student has an individual folder and an assignment sheet on a particular unit with an outline such as the following:

ASSIGNMENTS - UNIT I

I. Listening

II. Vocabulary Words

III. Reading for the Main Idea

IV. Reading for Detail

V. Review

and a weekly schedule such as this one:

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

M Assignments

T Assignments

W Current Events, Newspaper

Th Class Discussion

F Evaluations

Students select the manner in which they would like to work on their assignments: in a teacher-directed group, in a small group, or individually. With this strategy the teacher can adjust instruction to differing levels of comprehension.

Another management strategy is a more traditional plan similar to the usual kind of grouping plan used in the elementary schools. A modification such as the following works in the secondary classroom as well.

M Readiness Lecture

T Direct Instruction

Teacher-Initiated Activities

Interest Centers

Free Reading

W Groups

Th Groups

F Evaluation

Films

Special Activities

Of course, the teacher should vary this plan so that it does not become static and routine. Interest centers on bulletin boards, on mobiles, and in file boxes or file folders can reinforce and expand skill development through very motivational means.

A more complete and detailed grouping system (Townsley) is illustrated in Figure 1. Although few secondary classrooms are organized in this manner, those that have been similarly managed work very smoothly after the students have been carefully instructed in the required procedures.

Various types of contracting systems are also effective with secondary level students. Project Succeed (South Carolina State Department of Education, 1973) suggests these organizational components:

units of work based on a set of objectives

contracts based on units

individual folders for recordkeeping

A sample contract on football contains fifteen activities, each worth a certain number of points (from twenty to thirty-five). The student contracts for a specified number of points equivalent to a desired grade. The teacher can include activities at a variety of levels on one contract.

Finally, high school content area teachers can adopt even more highly individualized approaches. An example is the use of a calendar as a record form (Metts). A student receives two mimeographed sheets for each month, one called "What I did" and the other, "What I Learned." The teacher adds required assignments to the "What I Did" page, for example "group work every Thursday." The student then keeps a brief anecdotal record of his activities and writes a statement about each day's activities.

A more complex example is an individualized system, the Individually Guided Education Model (Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc. and Wisconsin Research and Development Center) which is being tested at the secondary level. The IGE model has proven very successful in middle school classrooms. The particular IGE classroom referred to in this paper (Thompson) evidences the following elements:

-a sequenced continuum of objectives written by the teachers

-pre- and post-tests on groups of objectives

-a class record sheet (teacher's) by student by objective

-a student record card (student's) with personal objectives

-student progress cards (Parent's) listing objectives being studied and their descriptions

The teacher's focus is the provision of activities to meet the needs of every student, each of whom has a personal set of objectives

based on his pre- and post-tests. Use of this model at the high school level should prove an increasingly exciting venture; the book What Is the IGE High School? (Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc., 1973) presents an overview of IGE.

This article has presented several organizational strategies for the secondary teacher. Doubtless there are many other ways to manage classrooms to address the individual student more effectively. It is important that a major goal of secondary educators be the discovery and implementation of such designs for organizing "gobs" of students.

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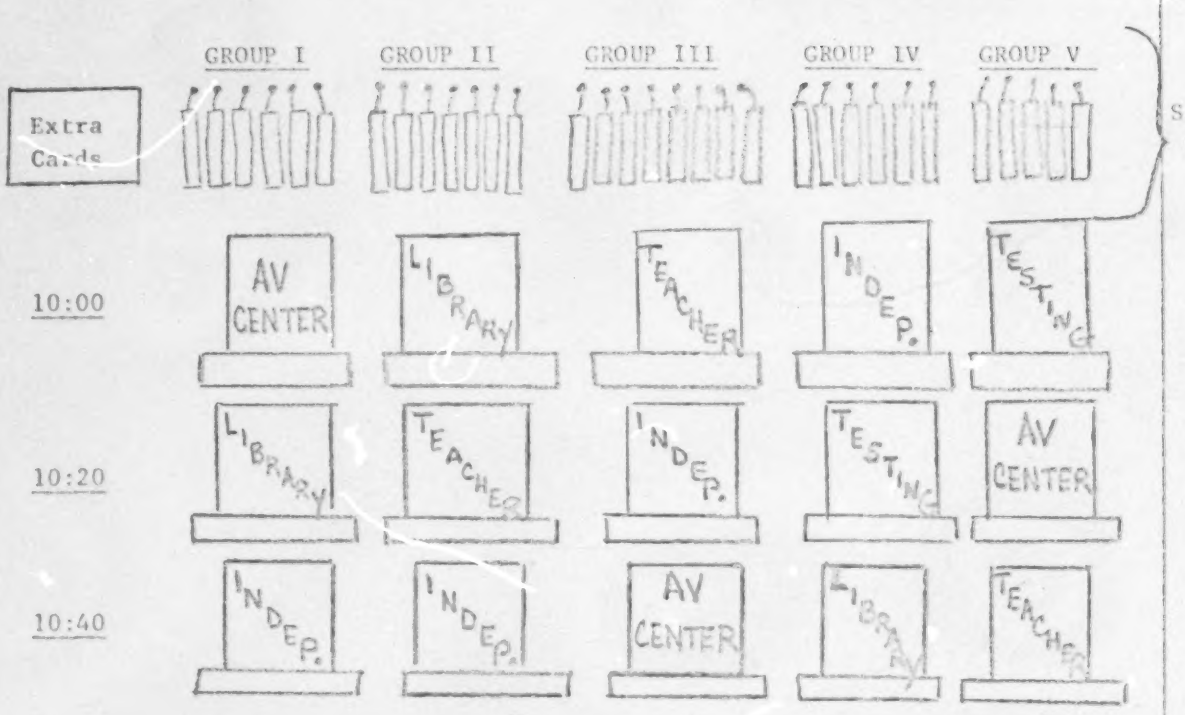

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